



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Tuesday, September 3, 2002

Monroe County Strengthens Nuclear Safety Plan Schedules Distribution of Potassium Iodide to Ginna Area Residents via Wegmans Food Markets

The County of Monroe, in partnership with Wegmans Food Markets, will begin distributing Potassium Iodide (KI) to residents of Monroe County who live within the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ) of the Ginna nuclear power plant located just east of Monroe County in Wayne County. Distribution is set to begin today at four Wegmans stores closest to Ginna.

“Distributing KI to those living within the 10-mile radius of Ginna is another step we can take in helping safeguard residents should an unlikely emergency arise,” said Monroe County Executive Jack Doyle. “Recipients should remember, however, that KI should be taken only when instructed by the County Health Director through the emergency alert system. KI is just an extra protective measure. In an emergency, affected residents should continue to shelter in place or evacuate the area as directed by the emergency alert system.”

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, federal, state and local governments have all acted to strengthen security and further protect the public. In December 2001 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a new recommendation for the distribution of KI to residents adjacent to nuclear power plants. The KI is to be taken only under emergency conditions and is intended as an additional safety precaution. It does not replace the existing emergency plan to evacuate or shelter-in-place during a radiological emergency.

Potassium Iodide protects the thyroid gland from radioactive iodines. Such iodines could be released into the atmosphere only in the most serious type of a nuclear accident. It is *not* a substitute for more familiar and thorough emergency preparedness steps, such as sheltering-in-place or evacuation. Potassium Iodide is safe. It has virtually no side effects. Residents should however consult their physicians on KI and interaction with prescriptions or allergies.

Recently, the Monroe County Department of Health sent letters to all households with a postal address within the 10-mile EPZ containing information about KI and a coupon to pick-up a free family allotment of KI (one per person) at four participating area Wegmans stores nearest Ginna.

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“We have worked closely with officials from RG&E, Wayne County and our own Office of Emergency Preparedness to coordinate this important federal initiative,” said Andrew Doniger, Monroe County Health Director. “I thank them all for their cooperation. I must also thank the civic minded participation shown by Wegmans Food Markets for assisting in the challenging job of distributing the KI pills to more than 17,000 resident neighbors of Ginna.”

The federal government has provided an ample supply of KI to Monroe County. Area residents will be able to pick up their supply throughout the entire distribution period from September 3rd through September 28th. The following Wegmans stores will be the distribution point for KI:

1. Wegmans Holt Rd., Webster
2. Wegmans Eastway, Penfield (Empire Blvd.)
3. Wegmans Penfield Store (Rt. 250/441)
4. Wegmans Newark Store

“So many of our customers live within the area targeted for distribution,” said Jo Natale, Wegmans’ manager of consumer services, “and with four Wegmans stores in close proximity, it made sense for us to help in any way we could.”

The free KI allotment is intended only for residents living within the 10-mile EPZ who received the Monroe County Department of Health letter. Area businesses are not included. KI can be purchased at a nominal fee over-the-counter at most Wegmans stores and other retail pharmacies.

The use of KI by residents is only necessary in emergencies where the public is likely to be exposed to radioiodine. The Monroe County Office of Emergency Preparedness monitors all radiation emergencies involving the Ginna Nuclear Power Plant and will issue advisories informing the public whether KI should be taken.

Monroe County is not alone in undertaking this public safety initiative. Other communities surrounding the six nuclear power facilities throughout New York State are implementing similar programs to distribute KI to residents living near nuclear reactors.

“We have a very good relationship with Wayne County and RG&E regarding public safety information and Ginna,” said Doyle. “This program is another example of how we are working together in order to better safeguard our community.”

Along with Monroe County, Wayne County is also utilizing the support of Wegmans for the distribution of KI. You can contact Wayne County at (315) 946-5665 for further information regarding their program.

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*For further information, call:
Communications and Special Events, 428-2380
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